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SIXTH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE
ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF
GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
New York, 25 August-3 September 1992
Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

REPORTS BY DIVISIONS AND GOVERNMENTS ON THE SITUATION IN THEIR REGIONS AND COUNTRIES AND ON THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES SINCE THE FIFTH CONFERENCE

Report of the East, Central and South-East Europe Division

Paper submitted by Czechoslovakia on behalf of the Division**

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** Prepared by Imrich Hornansky, Chairman of the Division.

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1. During the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, held in Montreal from 18 to 31 August 1987, Czechoslovakia assumed the charimanship of the East, Central and South-East Europe Division. The present report covers the Division activities for the period 1987-1992.

A. Divisional meetings

2. Three meetings were held during the period:

(a) The ninth meeting (Bratislava, 13-17 March 1989) was attended by delegates from Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and observers from the former German Democratic Republic;

(b) The tenth meeting (Prague, 10-14 June 1991) was attended by representatives from Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland. Bulgaria sent a written report;

(c) The eleventh meeting (Bratislava, 5-7 May 1992) drew representatives from Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and observers from Slovenia. Bulgaria sent a written report.

3. All subjects of common interest of the Division were on the agenda of the divisional meetings. Problems of toponymic guidelines, concise national gazetteers, national name standardization, exonyms and romanization were emphasized.

4. Representatives from the Division's member countries participated in the meetings of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names as follows:

(a) The fourteenth meeting (Geneva, 17-26 May 1989): Czechoslovakia, Poland;

(b) The fifteenth meeting (Geneva, 11-19 November 1991): Czechoslovakia, Poland.

5. Cyprus and Turkey were active in the Asia South-West Division (other than Arabic), and Greece in the Romano-Hellenic Division. Only some countries participated in the activities of the Division, which comprised the following member countries: Albania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Turkey and Yugoslavia. While each member was invited to the Division's meetings, it was unfortunately not always possible to establish contact with all of them.

6. Considering the importance of work on standardization of geographical names, it is hoped that in future every member country of the Division will exert effort to contribute to the work in an effective way.

B. Geographical names authorities

Bulgaria

7. Since 1991 geographical name standardization has been in the competence of the Office of Geodesy, Cartography and Cadastre of the Council of Ministers (Commission on Standardization and Transcription of Geographical Names).

Czechoslovakia

8. The following authorities are established:

(a) Czech Republic. Standardization of geographical names outside the home territory is in the competence of the Czech Office of Geodesy and Cartography (COGK) (Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names by COGK).

Names of municipalities and parts of municipalities are in the competence of the Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic (Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names of the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic);

(b) Slovak Republic. Standardization of geographical names outside the home territory is in the competence of the Slovak Office of Geodesy and Cartography (SOGK) (Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names by SOGK).

Names of municipalities and parts of municipalities is in the competence of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic (Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names by the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic).

Hungary

9. Standardization of geographical names is in the competence of the Committee on Geographical Names.

Poland

10. Standardization of geographical names:

(a) On the territory of Poland, is in the competence of the Commission on Standardization of Names of Municipalities and Physiogeographical Objects of the Council of Ministers;

(b) Names outside the territory of Poland (exonyms) fall in the competence of the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Territory of Poland of the Ministry of National Education.

Slovenia

11. Since 1986 standardization of geographical names has been in the competence of the Commission for Standardization of Geographical Names of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia.

C. Toponymic guidelines

12. In accordance with resolutions V/14 and IV/4, Czechoslovakia published "Toponymic guidelines on use of geographical names within the territory of Czechoslovakia" in 1987. In accordance with resolution 4/IV, an updated version is planned in the future.

13. In Hungary in 1979 toponymic guidelines were published, and a concept of its updated version is being prepared at present.

14. In Poland no toponymic guidelines have been published as yet; they are planned for 1993. For the time being, they are partially replaced by the book Geographical Names of the Republic of Poland.

15. In Bulgaria toponymic guidelines for foreign users are elaborated and they will be submitted to the Government for assessment. After they are approved, an English version will be sent to the United Nations.

D. Concise national gazetteers

16. In accordance with resolution 35/II, concise national gazetteers were published:

(a) 1990. "Geographical names of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republics" comprises standardized geographical names from the 1:750,000 map;

(b) 1991. "Geographical names of the Republic of Poland" comprises standardized geographical names from the 1:500,000 map.

E. National name standardization

17. Work in this area varied because of the influence of new economic conditions in the Division member countries. Most of the countries did not publish national lists of standardized names in the observed period. In Czechoslovakia work continued mainly on publishing standardized geographical names of the following districts and other features from topographical maps on 1:10,000 scale:

Banska Bystrica district (1987)

Hills and valleys of the Slovak Republic (1987): re-edition of a thematic selection of earlier standardized names from the 1:50,000 topographical map

Poprad district (1988)

Nitra district (1988)

States and their territorial parts, 2nd edition (1988): Czech and Slovak exonyms

Senica district (1989)

Stara Lubovna district (1989)

Liptovsky Mikulas district (1990)

Kosice: the town and Kosice provinces districts (1990)

Roznava district (1990)

Vranov nad Toplou district (1990)

Castles and chateaux in the Slovak Republic (1990)

Rivers and water areas of the Slovak Republic: the Bodrog and the Tisa basins (1990)

Komarno district (1991)

Trencin district (1991)

Trebisov district (1991)

Velky Krtis district (1991)

F. Exonyms

18. The exonym problem was always the most discussed in each divisional meeting.

19. In Bulgaria categorization of exonyms and method of their reduction was defined, based on general instructions for transcription of geographical names. A list of exonyms is being prepared to be published together with an updated edition of the list of the names of the States of the world.

20. The Czech and Slovak Federal Republic in its publishing programmes of cartographic products respects, in principle, the preference of endonyms. In cartographical products intended for national use, to the extent necessary, exonyms are given in parentheses along with endonyms. Among the Division member countries it was mainly Czechoslovakia that made the greatest progress in reduction of exonyms.

21. In Hungary, problems arise owing to the existence of new private publishers whose viewpoint on use of exonyms may differ from the viewpoint of the official State publishing institution, which respects, principally, the recommendations on exonyms of United Nations conferences.

22. In Poland there is a growing interest not to limit the use of exonyms. Representatives of individual countries in the Division have recommended a more intense future influence on all users of foreign geographical names, especially on newly established publishing institutions, to persuade compliance with the accepted international principles.

23. In Slovenia the policy of exonym application in cartographical production for the public is similar to those in Hungary and Poland. In the cartographical practices of Hungary, Poland and Slovenia the recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Standardization of Geographical Names IV/20 have not been applied sufficiently, because in certain of their cartographical products exonyms are preferred while endonyms are given only in brackets.

G. Romanization of geographical names

24. In the field of transcription of geographical names from non-roman alphabets and from non-roman scripts the following status has been achieved:

(a) In Bulgaria the system of romanization of Bulgarian script into roman characters adopted by the Third Conference in 1977 has not been changed nor are any changes expected;

(b) Among the member countries of the Division the "donor principle" has become domesticated rather successfully. In Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia romanization systems adopted by the United Nations conferences are being applied in cartographical works. In Hungary and Poland temporarily, the internationally adopted systems of romanization on the "donor principle" must compete with previous transcription systems elaborated on the "percipient principle".

25. Within the Division a suitable level of application of the transcription of the Chinese ideographical script, Pinyin, was reported. The situation is worse in cases where a country, having elaborated its own system of romanization, does not consistently apply it within its own country for designating geographical names or in non-cartographical applications. This applies mainly to the former Soviet Union and present Russia (in the

designation of names of towns, in road transport, air transport, correspondence, international sports contacts, transcription of personal names etc.) and in countries using Arabic characters. In the latter case it was found that besides the transcription system adopted by the United Nations Conference, several other, previously employed systems of transcription were used. Similar poor discipline of Greek publishers of cartographical works in roman transcription was evident. Some of them respect the adopted ELOT 743 system of transcription from Greek characters; others ignore it.

26. In transcription of geographical names of non-Russian republics of the former Soviet Union hesitation is observed because of the absence of transcription systems, of lists of geographical names for foreign cartographic publishers in roman characters and of suitable cartographical works published in roman transcript. It would be suitable here if the United Nations Conference made representations to the countries of the former Soviet Union of the need to comply with the resolutions of the previous United Nations conferences, mainly I/9, II/35, IV/15 and IV/16.

27. Generally, it may be said that the scope of application of the roman transcription system in the international scale depends more or less on the country's elaborating the given system on the "donor principle".

H. Working Group on Terminology

28. Mr. Ficor and Mr. Hornansky became members of the Working Group on Terminology at the Geneva meeting of the Group of Experts in May 1989. Mr. Hornansky took an active part in the work of this group in the period 1989-1992 both as a correspondent and as a participant of the Working Group during the meeting of the Group of Experts in November 1991.

I. Newsletter

29. As an institution within Czechoslovakia in charge of work related to the Division activities, the Slovak Office of Geodesy and Cartography sent three contributions to the Newsletter during the period 1987-1992. Divisional meetings found the Newsletter a useful and needed medium for the exchange of information in the period between conference meetings.

J. Election of new division chairman

30. The eleventh divisional meeting (Bratislava, 5-7 May 1992) was a suitable occasion to appoint a new Chairman of the Division. In accordance with the meeting regulations, Hungary was elected to that function for the period 1992-1997. It will enter into office at the UNGEGN meeting in New York on 4 September 1992.

K. Next divisional meeting

31. The next divisional meetings will be called by a new Division Chairman for the period 1992-1997, by Hungary. The preliminary meeting is planned to be held in the first six months of 1993 in Hungary.

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TOPONYMIC DATA FILES: DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Report of the Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers

Paper submitted by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names**

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** Prepared by Helen Kerfoot, Executive Secretary, Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names and Temporary Convenor of the Working Group.

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The Working Group convened during the fifteenth session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names in Geneva in November 1991. Those participating discussed what they felt should be the prime objectives of this group, to further the development of computerized toponymic records meeting acceptable standards, to promote compatible data structures, to facilitate toponymic data exchange, and to encourage the use of this information in national gazetteer publication programmes.

1. The first task quite clearly became the collection of information on toponymic databases existing in various Member States. A questionnaire was planned to determine what types of toponymic databases (digital and analogue) exist; what information is included and how it is gathered and updated; and, if databases are computerized, how the information is stored and disseminated. Ms. Mattisson of the National Land Survey of Sweden spearheaded the development of a suitable questionnaire. After input from Working Group members, this questionnaire was forwarded to the United Nations Secretariat in March (1992), for wide distribution (in English, French and Spanish) to national geographical names and mapping authorities. Early replies will be gathered into a preliminary report. Later responses are still very much needed so that the Working Group can use the information to develop suitable recommendations to present to the Group of Experts, for the benefit of all States Members of the United Nations. The information from the questionnaires will provide a valuable inventory of existing toponymic databases and system configurations and will be used:

(a) To assist those who need to develop automated toponymic databases;

(b) To cooperate on common data fields to be universally maintained (i.e. stored and updated);

(c) To collaborate to develop practical mechanisms for exchange of toponymic data between national databases;

(d) To work towards the acceptance and general use of international standards for data storage and exchange;

(e) To encourage the use of national toponymic databases for national gazetteer programmes.

2. For the initial development of many toponymic databases a PC-based system is ideal. The Working Group recommended that:

(a) Guidelines on database development, already prepared by some members of the Group of Experts for various toponymic courses be made widely available. These would be particularly valuable if they could be used on personal computers (PCs).

(b) One or more database packages be developed and made available (with no copyright restrictions) so that any Member State might take advantage of

simple menu-driven routines for developing a toponymic database to handle their own names records.

3. The Working Group recommends that training courses offered in toponymy and concerned with the development of national geographical names programmes and world standardization should contain, at least, a basic workshop on digital databases, their development and maintenance.

The role of the Working Group, in the immediate future, will be to evaluate the database questionnaire responses, from which recommendations should be made to address the common issues of assistance, cooperation, standards development and gazetteer production programmes, as noted above. Increased effort should be put into the creation of database packages which can be the foundation for Member States to set up their own computerized toponymic data files. Already existing guidelines on database development should be collected and made as widely available as possible.